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Lina Barakat

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City Branding: An Austin Case Study

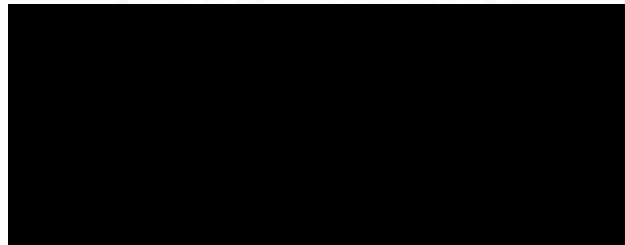
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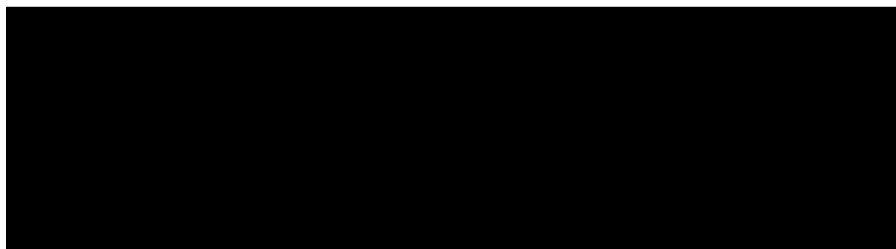
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Jason Cons
Department of Anthropology
Supervising Professor



Paul Adams
Department of Geography and the Environment
Second Reader

City Branding: An Austin Case Study

By

Lina Barakat

The University of Texas at Austin, 2020

SUPERVISORS: Jason Cons, Paul Adams

Globalization and changing power dynamics amongst nation-states has created new opportunities for smaller entities, like cities, to partake in international affairs and discussions. While global cities already have established economic and political roles on a global level, city leaders and stakeholders in emerging cities around the world have begun looking for ways to capitalize on their economic and political potential. One viable strategy for achieving this is city branding. The branding process helps highlight place-based attributes and collective experiences of people within the city in order to make a city more competitive while simultaneously creating a clear path forward. The city of Austin is a prime candidate for such a project because it is currently experiencing a crisis of identity at a critical growth point. After several years of rapid economic growth, city leaders and the stakeholders need to reassess the priorities and values of the city to ensure a clear path forward both at the local and global level. A city branding project would not only help contend with the competing visions that are found within the city but also help navigate the pitfalls created by such rapid growth. This thesis presents the tagline “In this Together” for Austin because not only does it help align stakeholders and local leaders under one prevailing idea, it also builds in the flexibility and innovation that has become emblematic of the

city. It helps reframe the city's priorities to ensure that the people are at the forefront because they ultimately ensure the legitimacy of the brand. Essentially, the idea here is that city branding can offer a framework within which important conversations can be had by city leaders and stakeholders about the priorities and values of a city and how those translate to real actions and change that happen at both the local and global level.

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Introduction

In a 2002 *Foreign Policy* article, Douglas McGray coined the phrase “Japan’s Gross National Cool” to describe the phenomenon that propelled the country toward becoming a modern global cultural superpower. Following World War II, Japan saw a massive decrease in political and economic power, leaving them few options to try and rebuild. With growing anti-Japanese sentiments in surrounding countries, the Japanese government created a strategy “to address its economic issues by using its creative industries,” (Tunstall, 2012, para. 19) essentially making Japanese culture its main export. TV shows, music, electronics, fashion, cuisine, animation all flooded out of Japan into the world, not only creating a specific image of the country and the culture of its people on an international scale but also helping internally rebuild what it meant to be Japanese in the post-war era. This effort allowed Japan to regain a seat on the global stage by having “great firms stake a claim to a collective intellectual high ground that left competitors...scrambling to reverse-engineer Japanese success,” (McGray, 2002, para. 11) in turn creating a phenomenon authentically Japanese. Nation branding in this instance was used to give “greater emphasis to the use of media culture,” in order to “enhance the image of the nation...to promote ‘pop-culture diplomacy,’” (Iwabuchi, 2015, para. 9) thereby increasing Japanese soft power. Formal government policies and institutions began developing under this ‘Cool Japan Initiative’ that helped solidify the country’s status as a cultural superpower. What this example highlights is “the increasingly ubiquitous discourses of soft power and nation branding in exercise of cultural policy,” (Iwabuchi, 2015, para. 9) that help places establish unique identities for the world. As globalization allows previously marginalized cultures an opportunity to expand beyond a country’s borders, governments are becoming aware of how the world sees and understands them. That consciousness is what has made place branding a trend amongst urban

planners and local officials because it provides a chance to rewrite the narrative and, in the process, gain economic, social, and cultural benefits. The ‘Cool Japan Initiative’ illustrates how powerful creating a cohesive identity can be for a country in the face of decline, but in recent years, cities have increasingly taken up similar causes.

As globalization metaphorically breaks down borders between countries and the world becomes increasingly interconnected, cities have an opportunity to define themselves beyond the context of their country and highlight what they have to offer to the world. The process of globalization has resulted in “greater movement of people and capital around the world,” (Fleming, 2019, para. 4) and with increasing uncertainty in the world, “citizens are growing restless and frustrated with their national politicians,” (Muggah, 2020, para. 1) leaving a gap for cities and local officials to fill. A growing number of local leaders “are stepping up to global challenges,” and reorienting the global mindset from nation-states to cities as they become increasingly powerful hubs for economic activity, diplomatic influence, and international connectivity, providing an alternative framework within which problems facing the world can be solved (Muggah, 2020, para. 2). Much like in Japan after World War II, city leaders and stakeholders are having to ask themselves the question of what unique assets can they provide the world and how does that translate into actions and policies. While economic success is vital for any city, it is becoming increasingly insufficient as an identifier; many cities around the world have plenty of economic capital. Especially for emerging global cities, as stakeholders begin to look outward, investing in the culture and creative industries unique to the city is the key from simply pooling money to making it work for them, and more importantly, contributing to the collaborative discussions about solving global issues . This thesis will investigate the role

of city branding and identity construction in the face of global power changes and the practical effects of branding the city of Austin, Texas.

Research Methodology

This thesis is a research-based project with a graphic design component. The information gathered for the research portion comes from anthropological research as well as a variety of other academic disciplines, each taking different stances on certain issues. Sources include reports written by agencies, books written by experts in their fields, online articles published by a variety of organizations and other sources. The main goal was to get as much up-to-date data and information about the topic as possible since global affairs and policies can change rather quickly. Some key foundational pieces are included to ensure the current information is grounded in established research. For the rebranding portion, surveys were distributed among people ranging from 20 to 63 years old who were a mix of residents and non-residents of Austin. The survey had questions ranging from general questions like how a person would describe Austin to more specific questions like naming attributes specific to Austin. The information from these questions were used to inform the rebrand and the subsequent designs. The logo, its variations, and the accompanying assets were made using the Adobe Creative Suite. The thesis as a whole is an exercise in branding and anthropological research.

Global Cities and A New World Order

Over the past few decades, the world has seen significant changes to economic and political systems, driven by the forces of globalization and urbanization. Much of the power shifts happening stem from the “ongoing decentralization of economic power,” (Stuenkel, 2017, p.63) and the anticipated decline of the Western World, particularly the United States, in favor of

other dynamics. While arguably the US “never had complete control,” the hard power championed by the country in the past is “no longer capable of converting it into actual influence over others,” (Stuenkel, 2017, pp. 64-65) in a world that has become increasingly integrated. Hard power, in this context, refers to direct influence and exertion of power, typically through economic or military coercion, while soft power refers to indirect influence through economic investments and alliances. Experts increasingly see “an unusual constellation in the distribution of power,” (Stuenkel, 2017, p. 83) as the future of global affairs moves towards no one global hegemon policing the world but rather a multipolar network of powers connected through regional and soft power alliances. As globalization helps massage out this future by further breaking down borders between nation-states and creating an increasingly integrated world, it is also creating a new opportunity for smaller scale entities such as cities to join the global network.

As nation-states face new political and economic realities, along with the looming uncertainty of future power dynamics, continuing globalization has created new opportunities for city officials and stakeholders to begin claiming power on an international scale. Global cities can then be treated as a case study for how cities participate on such a register. New York, London, Tokyo and Dubai have made “distinctive contributions to global growth and opportunity,” (Trujillo & Parilla, 2019, para.1) due to their distinct roles as economic, trade, and transportation hubs for the world over the past few decades. While there are only a handful of cities that belong to that elite category, city stakeholders around the world are starting to “take advantage of the new conditions as they emerge,” in an attempt to propel their own city to these new heights (Muggah, 2020, para. 5). The economic and political viability of emerging cities to participate in global affairs can be shown by the “increasingly significant proportion of national

GDP,” generated by cities and metro areas (Muggah, 2020, para. 4). For example, in the US, over a third of the country’s GDP comes from ten of the largest metro areas and local officials in those cities have the means to confidently enter such an arena (Muggah, 2020, para. 3). As mid-size cities incur more capital and move closer in status to true global cities, the percentage of economic, cultural, and social capital coming from cities on an international level will continue to increase, making cities as entities important actors in global affairs. What makes this potential new order interesting is that cities can represent a specific local vision that’s grounded in that place whereas nation-states contend with various levels of government and simply due to their scale, encapsulate more contradictions, making it difficult to pivot or adapt to the ever changing nature of global affairs. Over the past few years, it has become increasingly evident that city leaders are willing to make the first move in order to legitimize their stake in the world and their role in global discussions.

In seeming preparation for cities to become a key unit on an international scale, many city leaders have begun using their political and economic capabilities to strike out on their own and communicate a clear message about the power of cities. A recent example would be Mayor de Blasio passing an executive order in 2017 “that promised New York City would commit to the principles enshrined in the Paris Climate Agreement” (“Mayor de Blasio”, 2017, para. 1) after the Trump Administration formally withdrew the United States from the deal. The mayor’s action led the way for many other city officials to do the same. With more such incidents occurring over immigration and trade policies, the US Congress introduced The City and State Diplomacy Act in 2019 that formally allows “cities and states a greater voice in diplomatic missions and international policy-making,” (Muggah, 2020, para. 8) highlighting how, as city leaders have asserted their increasing power, nation-states could soon be facing a new reality.

While local governments still legally remain under the federal government, the changes that globalization and the impending power shifts usher in could soon allow a city's stakeholders a wider sphere of influence, opening the door for them to work congruently with national and international leaders. The introduction of The City and State Diplomacy Act clearly signals that the federal government has seen "foreign partners increasingly viewing engagement with U.S. mayors and governors...as essential to maintaining support for issues including free trade, human rights, and climate initiatives," (Swiney and Foster, 2019, para. 2) therefore, making it imperative for Congress to recognize that power but also attempt to maintain the involvement of the federal government in such dealings. While these tensions continually evolve, city leaders are still stepping into global discussions and deals, forging their own connections with various international actors. But in this case, New York City has had a trusted and well-understood reputation in the world for several decades. Mayor de Blasio stepping into such a role and incurring the responsibilities of a global actor on behalf of the city is a simpler task than a mayor in a mid-size Sun Belt city, which would have most likely developed within a local context. For various cities across the US, the past few years have been marked by rapid growth with no clear path forward. Most cities cannot garner the same influence as New York City organically without falling into major social and community issues which means the stakeholders within the city have to create and maintain a direct and pointed strategy to capitalize on this moment.

As globalization continues to precipitate changes on every register, city leaders looking to make an impact both locally and globally face the question of how to avoid getting left behind. The answer: branding. By creating a strong, unique, and trusted brand through various means, the stakeholders within a city not only ensure the continued success at the local level but also allow that success to be leveraged in a way that heightens the city's global standing. But the task

of branding a city is not just a logo or an Instagramable sign; it encapsulates a process that requires claims to be made about identity and place in a way that highlights the unique attributes of the city and its people.

Identity and Branding

In the past few years, the terms brand and branding have become a ubiquitous part of online culture. Everyone and everything has a ‘brand’. But, the increased use of these terms has created a variety of misconceptions about the practice of branding that are important to clarify before delving into the complexities of city and place branding.

To understand what a brand is, it is first important to identify what it is not. A brand is not a logo, a visual identification system, or a product (Neumeier, 2006, pp. 2-3). All of these things contribute to a brand, but they do not define it. First and foremost, “a brand is a person’s gut feeling,” about a product, organization, or company (Neumeier, 2006, p. 2). Each person that interacts with a company or service has their own unique conception of it and branding is the practice that seeks to influence that conception. The visual brand (i.e. the logo, the icon, the monogram, etc.) is one way for that entity to communicate with consumers and influence their perception. It is aspects like customer service experiences, that have the most brand impact because they involve direct lines of communication. Branding is about managing all those entry points so that no matter how a person interacts with a company, they get the same specific gut feeling. Creating a consistent brand is about creating a consistent experience. What this means is that people’s conceptions of a product or company could be out of sync with what the branding was meant to communicate if those entry points create contradicting impressions. But what makes branding an effective tool across the board is that its main purpose is to highlight what makes a company or product different from its competition. The key to a successful brand is that

“people believe there’s no substitute,” for that entity, meaning that the value of that product or company is found in its unique attributes (Neumeier, 2006, p. 152). People have different perceptions about this company or that product based on the value that buying or interacting with these entities brings to their lives. While the transient nature of a brand and its potential to contradict branding efforts do pose difficulties that have to be continually mitigated, successful branding efforts can be transformative when properly executed and maintained because it builds trust with consumers and establishes a strong reputation that makes the company or product increasingly valuable. For city leaders and stakeholders looking to take their city to the next level, branding offers a way to not only highlight place-based attributes that differentiate it but also add value to the city’s reputation that will ultimately help legitimize future ventures.

In order for branding to be an effective tool for city development, the process takes on a different framework than it would in the context of a company or service brand. Place branding has to consider the dynamic and often complex ideas entangled within a city and its population. The aim is to create “a network of associations” within a person’s mind “based on the visual, verbal, and behavioral expression of a place,” that are “embodied through the aims, communication, values, and the general culture of the place’s stakeholders and the overall place design,”(Zenker & Braun, 2010, p. 5) meaning that the brand is created by interactions with both the physical and metaphorical attributes of a city. The branding process, in turn, takes on more than just creating a new logo or developing policies; it requires conceptualizing and communicating specific cultural and social phenomena. Branding a city means grappling with “a complex system of interactions between the individual and the collective, between the physical and the non-physical, between the functional and the emotional, between the internal and the external,” (Kavaratzis & Hutch, 2013, para. 17) meaning that the overall brand sits on a

continually shifting foundation as perceptions change with new information and interactions. This allows the city as a whole to function as a source of symbolic capital, where “its imagery of historical fixity and future possibility promotes an ideology of collective, public interest,” (Robert & Schein, 2010, p. 31) and therefore makes its physical place a vital part of the city’s brand in the minds of those that interact with it. Fundamentally, place branding allows a city’s stakeholders to communicate a certain conceptualization of the city that is meant to reflect the local people’s gut feeling about this particular place. The branding of the city in this way allows local sentiments to be reflected outward into the world in hopes that tourists, potential businesses, and anyone else that interacts with the city in any way has a similar feeling toward it. By undertaking such a place branding initiative, people’s perception of the city will be grounded in the unique physical and metaphorical attributes of the city. But, cities, as with any large entity, consist of a wide range of actors, who often oppose or contradict each other, that contribute to the perception of the city therefore making the task of identifying a unifying theme and ensuring the success of the brand difficult. Without establishing a clear identity that can be effectively communicated, branding cannot be an effective strategy for the city moving forward. It begs the question of how such an identity can be found with a diverse and all too often divergent set of stakeholders within a city.

In the place branding process, the discussion of identity and the ultimate message that will be communicated is a difficult one to navigate, given the wide range of actors within a city. For an entity such as a city, identity means “the intrinsic features and history of a given place and a shared (personalized) relationship to these elements,” (Kavaratzis & Hutch, 2013, para. 10) allowing the final branded message to take on more of a culturally informed definition that can begin to contend with the contradictory views found within a city. Place branding as a project

requires an understanding of how people individually, as a community, and as a city population conceptualize and internalize the city as a place and as a culturally constructed object. It takes on the task of communicating the relationship between people and the urban space of the city and finding “the link between identity, experience and image,” (Kavaratzis & Hutch, 2013, para. 13) and bringing that together into a cohesive and unified message that is ultimately motivated by the place-based attributes of the city. By taking this approach, the city’s branding is able to contend with the inevitable contradictions amongst various stakeholders while still communicating an effective idea of the city. The description of branding for a city can sound simple but dealing with the power dynamics amongst various actors within a city and the potential unequal distribution of the benefits makes the process difficult. But, if branding efforts are created and carried out effectively and with a community focus, those difficulties can be mitigated in ways that build the city from the bottom up (all of which is explored in further depth in the last section). Arguably, if branding is meant to highlight the unique differences of a city, then taking such a culturally, place-based, and community driven approach to brand development would make the city’s identity even more compelling than if it were developed from the point of view of one or even a few powerful stakeholders in the city. This by no means eliminates the contradictions or solves inequality but what taking this approach to city branding does is help put the place and the community at the forefront of the discussion and create a framework within which competing stakeholders can begin to find some common ground and tackle the issues within their city. By grounding branding efforts in this built mosaic of individual and collective experiences and perceptions of the city, it only helps make the initiative that much more successful.

One example of how effective identity creation and curation can be is nationalism. Nation-states have been partaking in branding efforts for several decades and much of the same ideals can be used for cities looking to take up a similar initiative. Nation branding fundamentally rests on identity in the form of nationalism. Communicating a “nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time,” (Anderson, 2006, p. 3) and has the power to create not only long-lasting identities but deeply held ones as well. A nation at its core is “an imagined political community,” (Anderson, 2006, p. 6) for two key reasons. The first is that it is considered imagined because “the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members...yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion,” (Anderson, 2006, p. 6) meaning that nationalism and the nation as a whole gets its meaning from the constructed collective identity of the population, not on any physical or factual foundation. The other key reason for recognizing nations as imagined communities is that a national identity is “not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness” but rather the invention of a nation that did not exist before (Anderson, 2006, p. 6). This realization that nations and national identity rest on a construction illustrates how when nations take on the task of rebranding, they must grapple with deeply held beliefs that have been ingrained into the national fabric. Identity here is tied to larger cultural systems that far preceded modern narratives, allowing people to conceptualize how they are abstractly connected to the rest of the population when they may not directly know them. Cities undertaking the branding process step into a similar realm, where people’s individual experiences are informed by and contribute to this collective identity. Particularly for US cities experiencing unprecedented rapid growth, the changes to the city’s population, physical environment, and cultural sense makes it difficult to feel like the city has an identity to connect with if nothing is done. Much like how nationalism

functions for nation-states, city branding offers local communities and new arrivals alike a conceptualization of the city that is firmly grounded in place in a way that allows each person to feel like they individually contribute but are part of an imagined collective. The imagined aspect of a city's identity can become a vital asset because it means that should the need arise, it can be updated or adapted to the situation at hand. In addition to that, the connection to the city as a place and using branding to curate a unifying identity not only creates value for the local population but also builds in a level of stability and flexibility that otherwise may not be possible for a smaller-scale entity.

Just as national identities face the shifting power dynamics, cities have to also contend with an uncertain future. One of the big shifts for national branding efforts, as Roger Cohen explains in *The New York Times*, is that “globalization is a contradiction of everything the nation state stands for,” (Olins, 2014, p. 135) and essentially uproots the boundaries that define where one identity ends and another begins. As the world becomes increasingly fluid and national borders slowly dissolve, the logical inclination is to see nationalism and nation branding on the decline as well. The opposite has begun happening. The increased accessibility of nation-states has made nation branding an even more attractive endeavor because such efforts have become an important part of economic success (Olins, 2014). National branding has to be continually updated and work to combine economic goals with traditional, emotional, and ideological purposes as a way of maintaining not only its own national identity but also its competitive edge (Olins, 2014, p. 136). This shift away from 19th and 20th century national branding efforts that were grounded in creating and maintaining “internal cohesion and pride” to helping legitimize “influencing and often dominating, neighbours,” (Olins, 2014, p. 134) also highlights the fundamental changes in what nation-states, and now cities, are focused on

achieving. Heightened competition for talent, falling cost of travel and the rising power of international media make the world accessible in unprecedented ways that necessitate national and local identities to be continually updated and maintained to highlight what makes them unique and why business should be done here and not elsewhere or why a person should chose this particular place to live over another.

But having a cohesive identity that highlights what makes a place unique and competitive in the new global market is no longer enough of a motivator for the outside world. What these trends signal is that as these “big changes in the social and political fabric of modern society,” continue to alter the global landscape, making a “more ‘public-oriented’ approach” to a city or nation-state’s identity has become vital to its success (Anholt, 2007, p. 19). The underlying force beneath the modern power of nation branding, and where city branding must set its sights is global public opinion. What global public opinion does is acknowledge that “reputation is a strategic concept centered on long-term impressions that are constructed by images and actions of an organization,” (Fullerton & Kendrick, 2017, p. 3) and that it plays an increasingly important role in the success of branding. By putting global public opinion at the forefront, place branding can be seen as “the active, strategic management function” (Fullerton & Kendrick, 2017, p. 3) of changing people’s perception of that place. This is what will allow cities that are facing powerful moments of growth the chance to make the jump from a US middle-weight city to a global contender. As globalization takes “a series of regional marketplaces” of products, funds, ideas, culture, influence, trust and attention and fuses them into “a single, global community,” it becomes imperative that any global players that wish to partake must be able to contribute a “clear, credible, appealing, distinctive and thoroughly planned vision, identity, and strategy,” in order to compete effectively for the resources available (Anholt, 2007, p. 21). As a

city grows in positive global public opinion, the opportunities for competition increase, creating a cycle of reinforcement as they face other cities and grow in prestige from being associated with each other. Understanding that global public opinion has become an increasingly important consideration in city branding efforts and the role that garnering good will and favor with other leaders and stakeholders around the world has on the potential future of the city are signals of the changing place of cities on a global level. But global public opinion is not founded on logos. City leaders are now tasked with creating diplomatic and real actions that remain true to their city's identity but are also outward seeking rather than for internal benefit.

While diplomacy is an idea typically associated with the Secretary of State and thought about on a national level, it is recently become an important element for city branding. For city leaders that find their city in a position to actively compete on a global level, there grows an increasing awareness that “ identity, strategy, development, competitiveness and purpose,” are the only ways “to survive and prosper in a very new world order,” (Anholt, 2007, p. 19) and that it comes down to their ability to leverage their city's brand to help introduce novel solutions and ideas to discussions. Public diplomacy is where the idea and communication of an identity meets real time action because unless there is coordination ” between stakeholders and main policy makers “and all are linked through effective brand management to a single, long-term,” (Anholt, 2007, pp. 14-15) strategy, the contradictions that branding attempts to mitigate will ultimately cause the endeavor to fail. This is why creating a cohesive and unified city brand is vital because unless everyone involved is coming from the same set of values, nothing can be effectively accomplished on the local level, let alone a global level. Having “clear positioning, a believable and attainable set of promises, and a well-maintained and well-deserved reputation become essential attributes,” (Anholt, 2007, p. 20) to a city's brand because it means that in every

interaction a city's stakeholders have, whether its industry leaders or local officials, there is a clear, trusted, and consistent perception of the city being communicated. It makes the city easily recognizable in an increasingly populated pool and adds a level of competitiveness to the city as others buy into the unique identity. This becomes important for diplomacy because as a city's stakeholders go about their business and cultivate connections both within the city and beyond it, they become an entry point for others to construct a perception of the city by extension. When looking at global public opinion, if a city brand has clearly communicated the unique values and attributes of the city effectively, a city's mayor or the heads of the local industry can be seen as an asset in discussions about global issues and trends. They are seen as valuable because the city's clear and consistent brand helps others understand what these actors bring to the table and because the brand is grounded in that particular place, their contribution in helping create solutions becomes uniquely invaluable.

An important question that arises from city branding and its connection with diplomacy is the measure of its effectiveness in not only creating actionable change but ultimately contributing to the world. The Happiness Index, introduced in 2012, became an important entry point for people's perception of a place a few years ago. Its creation highlighted a global desire to live, visit, and do business in places that were happy. While that index remains an important consideration, nation-states are now being evaluated in a new way. The Good Country Index measures "what each country on earth contributes to the common good of humanity, and what it takes away, relative to its size," ("About the Good", n.d., box 1) signaling the growing interest in how a nation-state is able to leverage its unique attributes to benefit those beyond its borders. The argument made by the creators of the index is that countries and cities aren't admired because they are rich, powerful, modern, or successful, but rather they are admired for the good

they do for the world (Anholt, 2014). In this case, a nation-state's brand becomes more valuable because it "seems to contribute something to the world in which we live," (Anholt, 2014, 9:40) and therefore the world benefits from having it. The Good Country Index and the research it is based on emphasizes that "this is not about money. This is about attitude. This is about culture," and importantly, "This is about a government and a people that care about the rest of the world and have the imagination and the courage to think outwards instead of thinking selfishly," (Anholt, 2014, 13:15) highlighting the ultimate connection between local sentiments and global action. The impact of the good being exported from a place begins with the values enshrined in the identity of the city, the cohesive buy-in of those involved, and the ability to collaborate to create actionable plans. The reason that this index becomes important for city branding is that in the not too distant future, similar research efforts will start focusing on cities as they gain a more active role in global affairs. A similar expectation of doing good for the world will be placed on city leaders and stakeholders, but certainly not on the same scale as nation-states. That new level of participation for city leaders will mean that they, along with the myriad of actors and stakeholders within their city have to, not only, fundamentally understand and believe in what their city uniquely has to offer but also be able to come together and create actionable steps to achieving their goal. The competitiveness of a city brand will, at least partially, be then determined by new research aimed at evaluating the city. The important thing to note here is that city leaders have the opportunity now to begin the branding process and build a framework within which these future outward seeking projects can be easily discussed and implemented rather than do so as a reactionary step to bad press.

This call for the stakeholders within a city to look beyond their boundaries, even their national boundaries, and see how they can help the world in a way that remains true to their

identity is unprecedented and truly an indication of changes occurring on several registers. As the decentralization occurring in the top tier of global affairs amongst nation-states creates gaps, city leaders are looking for strategies on how to fill them and place branding offers an advantageous route to doing so. Ultimately, the purpose of city branding is to create a perception of the city and curate a positive brand association through real time, legitimate action, and cohesive experiences in order to show the world what the city has to offer. It is meant to express a unique, place-based identity that provides those within and outside the city a clear idea about who the city is, what it does, and why it matters at that moment. There are various examples of cities that have been victims of their own success because the complex web of power and economic capital found in the top tier of the city generated so many conflicting identities of the city, all of which heavily advantaged one part of the population and created crippling inequality amongst the city's lowest income brackets. But at the crux of the issue is that in doing this, these stakeholders lessened the appeal and value of the city because no one had a clear idea of what the city had to offer its people or the world. Creating a city brand and going through the branding process helps everyone within a city understand that every person, from industry executives to local musicians, contributes to and benefits from a clear and cohesive brand. The effects of globalization move at a brisk pace and if mid-size, emerging cities want a chance to capitalize on the opportunity to grow their scope, the various leaders and stakeholders have to be grounded locally through a strong identity, see themselves as stewards of the attributes unique to that place, and in their own ways share that with the world.

The City of Austin

Over the past few decades, Austin has seen an unprecedented amount of growth and attention. From emerging industries to an increasingly young population, the city is poised for

dramatic changes and a boost onto the global stage, if it is able to leverage what makes it unique while mitigating the problems within the city. Newly classified as a Knowledge Capital Global City by the Brookings Institute, it ranks first in GDP growth and Foreign Direct Investment amongst other cities in the category but lags below average on other indicators such as innovation statistics and higher education attainment (Trujillo & Parilla, 2019). While the city's current direction has served it well in helping it become one of the fastest growing major metro areas in the nation, it has failed to highlight the essence of Austin beyond investments and bring forward its unique identity. What makes Austin the ideal case study to illustrate why city branding is advantageous at this point is precisely because it is currently experiencing a crisis of identity, an important moment where many cities previously faltered, therefore creating an opportunity to step back, build a strong identity and brand associations, but most importantly, create value for those within the city and in the future, the world.

Current State

While the city's current direction flows from a variety of sources ranging from government to commercial entities, one of the main organizations representing the city and its interests outside of the government is The Austin Chamber. This independent nonprofit organization consists of local business owners who seek to attract talent and grow the business community. They played an active role in helping Austin achieve its business success, which in turn has helped the city reach its current state. Through a program called Opportunity Austin, they implement "five-year regional economic development initiatives aimed at fostering job-creating investments," ("Opportunity Austin", 2018, para. 1) working in tandem with local government and businesses. For the third iteration of this program that spanned from 2014-2018, the group's top priorities were "Economy, Talent, and Place," which they achieved by

diversifying the economy, deepening the talent pool, and maintaining the region's attractiveness for businesses and entrepreneurs (“Opportunity Austin”, 2018, para. 3). They hold the view that “Austin’s quality of life depends on our ensuring Austin has a healthy and growing economy,” (Enoch, 2020, para. 7) and that the markers of success are increase in jobs, wages, and talent. Since 2004 when the Chamber got its start, the framework and goals have stayed fairly consistent. While this is by no means the only driver for the rapid growth of the city, similar plans and ideology can be seen echoed throughout, bringing high rates of growth and investment and taking Austin from being seen merely as a capital city or college town to being understood as something much more and has transformed nearly every aspect of the city. The idea that the economically productive aspects of the city are what maintain the city’s quality of life conjures the image of a flat city with no real sense of the unique cultural or social attributes. But the reason this becomes important for discussing Austin’s brand is that such rapid growth in various sectors simultaneously creates more than just economic capital and a skewed image of the city. It also brings competing ideas about what the city should be and creates pitfalls in the future, should they remain unaddressed.

Competing Visions

The question of who the main stakeholders in the city are has become both an easy and complicated question for Austin. There are several industrial sectors, some bigger than others, that call the city home. There are various levels of government at work. There are an increasing number of anchor institutes, which are “entities having a large stake in a city,” (Penn, 2010, p 1), along with a wide range of tourist attracting events. What these all have in common is that they have become the entry points in people’s perception of the city and mainstays in international coverage of Austin, while also exerting influence on a local level. Each festival, event,

institution, and industry sector contribute something to the city, but they also create brand issues.

It is no secret that one of the biggest success stories for the city in the past few years has been the development of the tech industry. With over 7,200 employers making up 15.8% of all jobs in the city and growing by 6.6% per year, Silicon Hills has quickly taken over Austin (Kerr, 2019, para. 1). The city's history with tech and research goes back to the 1950's when "several research laboratories and think tanks had been founded and began to draw innovative thinkers and high tech companies to the area," (Kearl, 2020, para. 6) after the Great Depression and at a point where the city needed a new identity. Innovation is part of the foundation of Austin and today, Silicon Hills has created unprecedented amounts of growth and economic activity, building on that tradition further. For major employers such as Apple, Samsung, Google, Dell, and IBM that may have otherwise called California's Silicon Valley home, many have found Austin's "business-friendly state, low tax burden, no state income tax, and living costs below the national average," ("Advanced Manuf.", 2019, para. 1) to be increasingly desirable and an easy sell to relocated employees. As more tech industry companies relocate or open regional offices in the area, the more attractive it becomes to others, making the city increasingly the forefront of many fields. Austin is a "a leader in semiconductor and electronics R&D and manufacturing," and "is home to Samsung's largest semiconductor production center outside of Korea," ("Advanced Manuf.", 2019, para. 7) attracting businesses in the creative and digital media technology, clean tech, internet, and even looking toward space technology. Essentially, Chamber Austin and the City have been able to make Silicon Hills a premiere place for technological innovations to be designed. But with that kind of magnetism, the high-tech sector is beginning to dominate the city's narrative. The local news section in the Austin American-

Stateman is overrun with tech startups funding stories and companies across the US relocating to the city for a shot at the top. While this is excellent for the economy and for business in the city, the hyper focus given to the industry in discussions about the city creates a very one-dimensional view of Austin. The buzz around Apple, Google, Dell and the other major employers overruns every other sector in the city in local, state, and even national news outlets, which in turn has given the sector significant control over people's perception of Austin. This is not to say that the tech industry should be ignored or not talked about, but rather there should be a change in how it gets discussed. Talking about the tech sector in a vacuum and the city as merely a tech hub disregards the other factors outside of the industry that have made it successful in Austin. But this kind of tunnel vision created by a dominating industry is not a new issue for city brands.

Following the wave of industrialization in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, people's definition and understanding of cities changed dramatically. Cities "became primarily defined by the industrial goods they produced," like Pittsburgh and steel or Detroit and car manufacturing (Portes & Armony, 2018, p 3). They came to be understood as industry leaders, emblems of the commerce and production that take place in their cities. While that may have been beneficial at the time, most east coast cities since then have faced the difficult task of revitalizing old industrial areas and rebranding their city for a modern and globalized world following the departure or decline of their once money-minting industry. Many are seen as having "ultimately sown the seeds of their own demise," due to "their own self-inflicted wounds," (Florida, 2019, para. 17) because of the vulnerability created by the singular conceptualization of the city. This shift to understanding cities as "a market commodity capable of generating wealth and power," (Robert & Schein, 1993, p. 22) specifically in the context of one industry is problematic because the departure of the main industry also means the loss of the

city's identity. If city leaders and the stakeholder view the city exclusively through the context of supporting a single industry sector, then everyone else's perception of the city funnels through that same lens. The city's brand becomes that industry, because there would be few other entry points for people to develop a holistic view of the city. In today's globalized world, having a single industry identity creates a lack of flexibility that most stakeholders can ill afford given how frequently city development plans have to pivot in order to accommodate changes in both the national and global political and economic realms. Successful industry sectors should be talked about and highlighted but not at the expense of the other aspects of a city. People's perception of a city like Austin should be more than just one dimensional. It should communicate a more in-depth and holistic image of the city; one where tech does not steal the show but rather plays a supporting role.

But before the tech industry had a stronghold in the city, the typical image conjured of Austin was 'The Live Music Capital of the World'. Adopted by the City Council in 1991, the moniker was meant to encapsulate the vibrant music scene that had taken root in the city in the 1970's and 80's but later came to embody Austin's signature casual and laid back vibe (Buchele, 2016). Today, the nickname lives on in two of the largest events that call the city home: Austin City Limits and SXSW. Hosted over two weekends with performances from over a hundred artists, The Austin City Limits Music Festival is estimated to have brought in 70,000 fans from all over the world and generated almost \$264.6 million for the city last year alone (Salazar, 2019). This festival is an extension of the now institutionalized PBS tv program, Austin City Limits. The show is the "longest running music program in television history" and was named by Times "as one of the 10 most influential music programs of all time," for the diversity of music styles and genres it highlights ("What Is Austin City Limits", n.d., para. 1). SXSW got its start in

the mid 1980's as a passion project for a group of people wanting to discuss "the future of entertainment and media," and a want to use a local event "to bring the world to Austin" (Swenson, n.d., para. 2) and showcase local talent. Since that initial meeting, the event has grown on an exponential scale, now spanning several different conferences over two weeks. The core mission of "bringing people from around the globe to meet, learn and share ideas," (Swenson, n.d., para. 8) remains to this day and becomes increasingly evident with how Austin is perceived by those flocking to the festival. Both festivals are still huge draws for tourists and take over the city's economy during event weekends. But much like the tech industry, if these festivals are the only entry points people have to create a perception of the city, it creates a vulnerability in Austin's long-term identity. It creates a one-dimensional brand that not only leaves out other stakeholders within the city but also lacks the flexibility to accommodate changing circumstances. Should something happen that halts live music in the city, the city itself and the other sectors continue because live music is one part of the identity, not the centerpiece and should be understood as such. SXSW and ACL are reminders of the musical rebirth that occurred in the 1970's and of Austin's history, but the reality is that live music doesn't play the important role it once did in the city (the reasons for which are discussed in a later section). What is important for this purpose is that a brand centering on live music is just as unsustainable as one centered around the tech industry. The difference between the two is that while the tech brand would be one sector dominating the narrative, a live music brand creates a skewed image. Not only has there been a steady decline in the local music economy, but SXSW and ACL, which would be the largest representations of live music in the city, only make up 1.8% of all music festival attendance in the US (Flanagan, 2017) (Florida, 2019). This means that having live music be the prevailing brand or perception of the city paints an inaccurate picture of what

Austin has become in the wake of its rapid growth. While the moniker has lost its charm over the past few years, it did usher in a new kind of brand image that has become an economic engine but creates a similar problem.

The want to attract people to a city is one that has only grown stronger as the world becomes increasingly connected. Even in a national context, tourism, and the movement of people in and out is important to any city. While ‘The Live Music Capital of the World’ painted one picture of Austin, it inadvertently created a simultaneous image for tourists that has taken on new life during the city’s rapid growth. Ranked the number one coolest city in the US by Expedia, Austin’s vibe is one of the more well-known aspects of the city (Rogers, 2017). The city’s signature laid back and casual vibe is very well known outside of Austin and paints a picture of an idyllic cityscape in the minds of those that do not live in the constant hotel construction downtown. While not as prominent as the tech industry or the ‘Live Music’ moniker, people’s perception of what Austin is always carries a twinge of this cool factor. This could be because the city has the second highest shares of millennials in the country, according to a Brookings Institute report (Frey, 2018, p. 18). The report mentions that as “a university town and state capital,” (Frey, 2018, p. 17) as well as a “tech-knowledge economy center” (Frey, 2018, p. 30) on top of that, makes the city a magnet for a young and educated population. The image of this demographic creates a caricature of the city and what it means to live in it. More than that, it makes Austin seem like “half hype, half real,” (Pagano, 2018, para. 9) as the parts that made the city unique slowly fade into the background in favor of larger commercial enterprises looking to cash in on the attraction. This is because “Austin does hype well”, (Pagano, 2018, para. 6) people immediately associate it with a certain lifestyle and vibe, which leaves many within the city concerned about what will happen when the appeal is lost. The idea

of “embracing permanent structures that will be dependent on our city having to remain cool in the eyes of people who don’t even live here,” is already seen in the fact that “We’re erecting hotels built on the backs of live-music hype and yet pricing out the music venues,” (Pagano, 2018, para. 4) which goes back to the idea of selling a false image of the city (which will be explored further in a later section). But it proves an important point about the unique situation the Austin brand is facing; not only is the city experiencing unprecedented economic growth, but it is also becoming a victim of its own success as the economic engine begins to push out the old, while monetizing and selling experiences to fill the empty hotel rooms that are being built at lighting speed across downtown. This is not to say the city isn’t charming or that people should stop visiting. On the contrary, tourism and the movement of ideas and people in and out of the city is vital in today’s world. The point that the ‘cool’ brand illustrates is the vulnerability of allowing people’s unrestrained ideas of the city to become its guiding compass. This is not like the tech industry or live music image where they were based on real aspects of the city. The hype factor in Austin’s brand is one that has created a caricature of the city and in turn, created a demand for certain things to exist in the city that has been more than answered by various large corporations. This idealization of the Austin experience is just as unsustainable and creates just as large of a vulnerability as the tech industry and live music because they all create a one-dimensional idea of what the city is and what it should be. They each seemingly compete for top billing in people’s mind and would leave the city scrambling should the winds change.

While the tech industry, live music, and hype all illustrate the downfalls of having a one-dimensional city image, another potential reality for Austin is having too many stakeholders growing simultaneously in too many different directions that it splinters people’s perception. Spreading the image of Austin across different industries and allowing stakeholders in each to

gain an increasingly stronger hold in the city could not only spell disaster for Austin in the future but significantly hurt its ability to adapt and remain competitive in today's world. From the University of Texas to health care, from local and state government to the food industry, all of these sectors contribute to the economic and cultural heartbeat of the city but if left unchecked by an overall brand, could end up hurting Austin.

The University of Texas at Austin was one of the first places to put the city on the map. Founded in 1883 despite objections that a school so close to lawmakers “would be a terrible influence on their morals” (Kearl, n.d., para. 4), the university is “among the biggest and best research universities,” (“Overview”, 2019, para. 1) in the country. It is a “Tier 1 research university, [and] is the driver for innovation with over \$600 million in annual research funding,” (“Life Sciences”, 2020, para. 7) making it a natural fit for the thriving tech industry in the area. The Austin campus is the centerpiece of the wider University of Texas System , “one of the nation's largest higher education systems,” (“Impact on Austin”, 2010, p. 1) and attracts accomplished faculty, including a Nobel Prize laureate, a Pulitzer Prize winner, and winners of various other academic awards. Its alumni network is expansive, with more than 450,000 alumni “that live and work in the Austin area and surrounding counties,” (“Impact on Austin”, 2010, p. 1) making the university a key anchor institution for the young and highly educated population of the city. Austin was named one of the best college towns in the US by WalletHub, getting high marks for social environment (Friel, 2019, para. 3). What makes anchor institutions like UT so important is that they also tend to be key stakeholders of a city's identity. Such institutions can be both economic forces and developers of human capital, making them a true driving force for a city like Austin that is working towards innovation in a variety of sectors. The university is one of the main stakeholders in the city because not only does it provide a significant portion of

the workload and is one of the largest employers, it is also a key collaborator with the other industries in the city. But this also means that the actors within the UT system could begin to see their role in the city as more important because of the part they play in educating and training Austin's workforce. This kind of power concentrated in an anchor institution is good if it is being used to benefit the city on a large scale rather than silo it within the university. Issues around housing and gentrification have already plagued UT as it continues to expand outward and build new facilities. Without an overarching city brand to keep these actors in check and in line with the city's goals, it gives them the power to continue operating with their own interests and ideas at the forefront.

Along with the university, the health care sector has continued to grow and develop into an increasingly strong stakeholder in the city. It has become one of the largest industries in the city, with more than 170,000 jobs and headquarters for nine publicly traded healthcare companies ("A Vibrant Industry", 2019). There are forty-six hospitals and more than 4,000 physicians providing direct care to patients ("Healthcare, 2019). In 2016, Dell Medical School at the University of Texas at Austin welcomed its first class and marked the first step toward changing health care in the area. As "the first new medical school alongside a top-tier research university in this country in over five decades," (Andes, 2016, para. 3) it is also a part of two key development plans. The first is the city's "Innovation Zone", where research facilities and businesses get built in tandem with an anchor institution, like the city is hoping the medical school will become (Andes, 2016, para. 5). The second is the "Health District" where Dell Med and Dell Seton Medical Center are the main anchors for surrounding health care providers and medical research ("Health District"). What Dell Med and the future Innovation Zone and Health District exemplify is how Austin has become a "region of both established and emerging

companies that are changing the face of healthcare,” (“Healthcare”, 2019, para. 2) with its success after only five years. As these plans come to fruition, the healthcare sector will continue to grow its stake in the city and become an increasingly powerful actor. While having a thriving and innovative healthcare sector is an asset to any city, ensuring that it does not encroach on other initiatives and goals is important to keep it in line with the rest of the city. Having an overarching brand ensures that the stakeholders within the healthcare sector achieve what they want in order to grow and develop while ensuring the benefit of the overall city. It goes back to the idea that any sector within a city does not exist in a vacuum but alongside and in conversation with the other stakeholders in a city and should be treated and viewed as such.

The discussion surrounding stakeholders and power within the city become more complicated when the various levels of government present in Austin are taken into consideration. Not only are there local officials, but state and federal government agencies at work in the city as well. The City of Austin, Travis County, the State of Texas, and the US Military are among the largest employers in the city, accounting for about 17% of the employment (“Employment by Industry,” 2017). According to a recent WalletHub study, Austin is the best capital city in the country because of its economic health and high median income, quality of education and health, and overall quality of life (Lattimer, 2020) Sometimes referred to as “the blueberry in a tomato soup” (Webb, 2017, para. 1), Austin’s liberal and left leaning values are in stark contrast to the rest of the conservative and right leaning state, meaning that the presence of these various levels of government create an interesting, and at times, tumultuous, dynamic. The government always plays an important role in a city’s brand because it is through official offices and elected leaders that the consistency and maintenance of the brand is ensured. In this case, the government becomes the glue between the various sectors, creating the policies,

approving the permits, providing funding, and while not often executed correctly, looking out for everyone's best interest in the city. Austin is in the unique position of having all four levels of government present in the city, meaning that there is a considerable number of differing viewpoints and interests in how the city should be and further complicating the issue of the city's identity.

While these sectors represent some of the major stakeholders within Austin, there are many more that are clamoring for the top spot and are all growing at rapid rates. What this exploration is meant to illustrate is how easy it would be for a city like Austin, that has a wide range of successful industries and sectors that are each growing, innovating, and contributing to the city, to get spread too thin across them all and end up sacrificing the city's overall well-being as stakeholders move full-steam ahead on the ventures that benefit them the most. Cities are composed of complex power and economic dynamics that get further complicated as each sector grows in a separate direction from the others. One modern example of the pitfalls of having too many stakeholders with no solid framework to reign them in is Miami. Considered to be a global city on a regional scale, its economy centers around a variety of industries such as “merchandise trade and physical commerce; finance and banking; real estate construction and speculation; and art as a commercial form,” (Florida, 2019, para. 5) which have collectively created problems for the city as it continued to grow. As various “important actors, from banking and trade leaders to sports and art entrepreneurs, make their voice heard,” (Portes & Armony, 2018, p. 13) and implement their plans, the lack of centralized power within the city becomes evident. Its rise as a global city “has made housing more unaffordable...making it increasingly difficult for people in the workforce who earn salaries in the tens of thousands of dollars to find suitable housing in the city,” (Florida, 2019, para. 8) as developers and investors buy property across the city and bring

in huge profits at the expense of the city. Miami “faces the prospect of an increasingly amorphous social order, splintered among different interests and to which no one really belongs,” (Portes & Armony, 2018, p. 13) essentially becoming a victim of its own economic success. There are “many powerful economic and civic sectors, but none of them are hegemonic or dominant,” creating a power structure that “resembles a circle with lots of actors around the circumference and a hole in the middle,” (Florida, 2019, para. 14) all of which does not bode well for the city’s response to its impending climate change crisis. While Miami is different from Austin in a variety of ways, the growing pains that have plagued the city are not unique to it and serve as an example of what a lack of city-wide direction can bring. While Austin may not be at the point where the various sectors are at odds and growing at unsustainable rates, it does not mean that it won’t happen should the city’s stakeholders continue as they are now. The affordability crisis is already present and with projections showing more economic growth in the coming years, the potential to fall victim to the city’s own success is possible. The main point that Miami helps illustrate is the importance of a unified brand across the city. By conceptualizing the various sectors, industries, and stakeholders of a city as supporting and enriching one overarching image of the city, not only does that put everyone on the same path with the same trajectory, it also builds flexibility and adaptability into the city’s identity. This is by no means meant to simplify or idealize the power dynamics found in the top tier of a city, but highlight the fundamental value changes that have to happen on the city level in order to ensure and safeguard the overall well-being and vitality of the city’s identity. Stakeholders should not be running the show and calling the shots but rather finding ways to help enrich the city through collaborations with other industries, community initiatives, and various other means of bringing value to the place they occupy.

Both the one dimensional and the multi-dimensional images of Austin not only create vulnerability within the city but also highlight what cities today are facing. No longer is it enough to be growing economically but in an ever-changing world, success means safeguarding the city from future changes by building into its identity stability and flexibility. Both futures create inherent and deep vulnerabilities that should the winds begin to blow away from Austin would set the city back in a way that would make it difficult to rebuild effectively. They also create unstable models of growth that would eventually lead the city to become a victim of its own success, adding Austin to the list of examples for what cities should not do. This perception of the city as a commodity is one that is no longer productive because it disregards the overall context within which these industries exist and how the social and cultural problems manifesting in a city are just as important for the stakeholders to consider.

The reason this discussion becomes important in the context of branding and city identity is because it emphasizes what should not happen in a city. The stakeholders and the power they are given within a city matter because if they are moving forward with their plans with no prevailing brand to safeguard the parts of the city that get overlooked, it creates problems like the urban growth machine. A term coined by Logan and Molotch in 1987, the urban growth machine describes the phenomenon that occurs when a place is viewed as “a market commodity capable of generating wealth and power,” (Robert & Schein, 1993, p. 22) and in a city, that gets manifested as private and public partnerships that work to ultimately benefit the wealthy. It is the idea that such projects end up “promoting a private landscape as a public space,” (Robert & Schein, 1993, p. 26) where the city and its communities become opportunities for private investment and returns despite what ramifications such endeavors create. This is what Austin wants to avoid; the city’s stakeholders should avoid “the allure of financial possibilities inherent

in commodified places and the concomitant desire for growth serve to unite the diverse interests of urban elites,” (Robert & Schein, 1993, p. 22) because it will end up destroying the social and cultural fabric that makes success possible for the city. If the middle and lower class are getting priced out of their homes and forced to move, industries within the city will be left scrambling trying to fill the gap. The urban growth machine reinforces the illusion of the city because it hides the money trail behind the symbiosis of the private and public sector where outwardly, it looks like it is benefiting communities when in reality, it is making the rich richer at the expense of eroding the non-economic aspects of the city. An industry-first identity like the one dimensional or multidimensional possibilities described above create plenty of opportunity for weak points in the city’s identity to be exploited to this end. Austin has already suffered from early stages of the urban growth machine, as seen in the new condos, shops, and high rises that are quickly gentrifying East Austin. Branding is not a solve-all thing but rather creates a common ground that is specific to the place in order for stakeholders to effectively tackle new opportunities and problems facing the city together. It becomes the foundation upon which the city's future is built, ensuring that as many people as possible are represented in the city's future. Should Austin and its stakeholders continue on their current path with no adjustment or clearly defined identity to guide them forward, this mentality will exacerbate already complex and growing social and cultural issues.

Social and Cultural Crisis Points

When thinking about a city’s identity, industries and stakeholders are important considerations for not only the city’s brand outside its own population but also in acknowledging the important role they play within the city. But in the big picture, the economic factors play supporting roles in the city’s identity. If the goal of branding is to build a positive brand

association through real time action and cohesive experiences, then the group with the greatest influence on a city's identity is the people. Communities and their shared history and ideas are what make each city unique and therefore, if stakeholders are interested in ensuring a city's future success, there should be a concentrated effort to invest in the people. It is by addressing the problems facing the actual population of the city and ensuring that the decisions and actions made by various actors across the city are for the benefit of the people that live there, that a city's brand is not only legitimized but also valuable. One of the center points of branding is that in order for it to be effective, it has to be anchored to real actions and real change because otherwise, it would be propaganda. This means that the priority of the stakeholders should not be in fueling the hype machine and creating commercialized experiences for tourists but rather creating positive change in the local communities to build up and contribute to the city's vibrancy that has a far more powerful attraction value. These social and cultural points are what tie the city's identity to the specific place, that make it unique. More importantly, if the actions of stakeholders begin to erode that foundation or neglect it, it can create long term ramifications for the city. Austin, like many other cities that have experienced rapid growth, has its own share of issues to address within the population. Not only is there a looming housing crisis, but the dissolution of the music and creative industries highlight the points of disconnect between what Austin is currently saying it is and what people are actually experiencing.

Like many cities experiencing a rapid amount of growth, issues surrounding housing have become increasingly evident within Austin. As one of the fastest growing metro areas, affordability and increasing gentrification have created problems for much of the population. With a median home value at \$396,646 and having gone up 4.7% in the past year, Austin is considered a very hot market ("Austin Home Prices", n.d. Para. 1). The city has an overall higher

than average income with most people falling in the \$75,000-\$149,999 bracket (“Income”, n.d., graph 1) which is helpful when the median house price is \$405,000 and the median rent rate is \$1,750, both of which are expected to rise another four percent in the next year (“Austin Home Prices”, n.d. Para. 1). With Apple building a \$1 billion expansion and traffic at an all-time high, housing costs will continue to skyrocket and leave many of those who cannot afford to stay in the city behind (Azevedo 2018). Gentrification and homelessness in Austin grow at increasing rates as the city continues forward. As more young professionals working in tech relocate to the city, developers move into areas like East Austin that have historically been low-income neighborhoods and build new housing, uprooting the original occupants. Many grow increasingly frustrated as they see the city passing policies in favor of real estate interests over community concerns and as Austin continues to climb the rankings of rapidly gentrifying cities (Formby 2018) (Pan 2017). Areas like East Austin that have historically been home to minorities due to the city’s 1928 master plan, are now getting renewed attention for the potential new condos, restaurants, and amenities that can be built there as the percent of white residents in these areas saw a 442% increase over the last decade and a 66% decrease in the African American population in the area (Wray 2018). Austin is in the company of Silicon Valley, San Francisco and other tech hubs as they all increasingly grapple with the housing crisis that in turn creates and feeds into other issues. Having this kind of fundamental issue in a city is not one that is easily addressed, simply because of all the various contributing factors. But that does not mean nothing can or should be done; on the contrary, its presence highlights to the decision makers in the city that they are failing to safeguard the very people that can ensure their success. The housing crisis is a direct disconnect between what Austin stakeholders say the city is and what people are actually experiencing as low- and middle-class families relocate to areas outside the

city. But in addition to being an issue for people on the frontlines of the issue, a housing crisis is also a social and cultural issue as communities break apart and people leave homes that have generational significance, creating a crisis of place as well.

Housing and affordability issues have become a common symptom of economic growth for cities in the US and around the world. This is because a housing crisis is one of the manifestations of what Richard Florida calls The New Urban Crisis. Centered around “the fundamental contradiction brought on by urban clustering,” (Florida, 2017, para. 23) this phenomenon traces the various social issues that have followed rapid economic growth within cities. The five dimensions of the New Urban Crisis range from describing the widening wealth gap between places like New York and London and other smaller cities to the growing inequality and segregation happening across the board. One of the hallmark features of this crisis is that gentrification is being replaced by plutocratization, where “vibrant, innovative urban neighborhoods are turning into deadened trophy districts,” meaning that it is not only blue-collar and service workers leaving but middle class families that are having to spend a disproportionate amount of their income on housing are fleeing as well (Florida, 2017, para. 22). The idea is that it is “hard to sustain a functional urban economy when teachers, nurses, hospital workers, police officers, firefighters, and restaurant and service workers can no longer afford to live within reasonable commuting distance to their workplaces,” (Florida, 2017, para. 22) which is a reality that a growing number of cities, like Austin could be facing in the coming years. But the affordability issues come with inequality and segregation as a city’s population shuffles around in an attempt to simply keep living in the city. The urban clustering that fuels the New Urban Crisis exacerbates “the urban land nexus” where “the extreme clustering of economic activity in very limited parts of a very limited number of cities,” creates “increasingly fierce competition

over them” (Florida, 2017, para. 30) means that this is not a problem that will go away anytime soon. If a feedback loop is continually fueling and propelling the crisis forward, there comes a point where the stakeholders within a city have to step back and figure out their priorities as a collective within the city. Florida suggests that “Now more than ever, mayors and local officials will have to take the lead on transit, affordable housing, poverty, and other pressing urban issues,” (Florida, 2017, para. 33) as their cities continue to grow and the federal government becomes increasingly disinterested in providing aid. This is where clear and consistent city branding can help begin the right conversations about what can be done by the various stakeholders. It is ultimately in their best interest for them to address the issues because they have stakes in the success of the city and therefore can uniquely help people. A cohesive city brand provides a framework within which solutions and innovations can be discussed. If everyone at the table understands that the people of a city are the most important part of their city’s identity, then the resources and knowledge of each stakeholder can be leveraged to benefit the city overall. If having these issues in a metro city like Austin is the norm, then the exceptions are the cities that have created solutions and are using their unique attributes to preserve the essence of the city. Once economic capital becomes the limiting factor for people, their departure from a city also means taking with them their unique culture, ideas, and contributions, leaving the rich and powerful the run of an emptying city and a soon to be faltering economy.

For Austin, the housing crisis has already created issues within its cultural realm as musicians and other creatives are leaving the city in pursuit of affordability. As previously discussed, live music in the city is not what it used to be. The increasing interest in commodifying music through large festivals and the inability for the creative industries to keep up with rising housing prices has created the perfect storm for eroding at the city’s cultural core.

SXSW, ACL, and the “rapidly expanding population have put an unintended strain on the infrastructure of the local music scene which helped create them and on which they still rely,” (Flanagan, 2017, para. 1) and made it increasingly difficult for small venues to host live music as people flock elsewhere. Following the creation of the city’s Music and Entertainment Office, a music census was distributed to help identify what the challenges facing local venues and musicians were. The report found that “as revenues continued to grow for the larger events, the city was bleeding jobs within the local music economy,” (Flanagan, 2017, para. 5) meaning that these large events had become the draw of the ‘Live Music Capital’ rather than the smaller and more numerous venues that earned the city that nickname in the 90’s. Much like in the discussion of the overall housing crisis in the city, Austin is “losing its largely middle-class creative folks to the suburbs,” (Flanagan, 2017, para. 7) as the revenue gap between the two large festivals and the rest of the music industry widens. The “recent commercialization and development [within the city] has been perceived by many vocal Austinites as “homogenizing” and “invasive”, (Long, 2009, p. 216) and the result is one of the most unique attributes of the city being pushed out. But the plight faced by the creative community and in turn the loss of important cultural vibrancy, relate back to the idea of where the focus of a city’s stakeholders is and why they should be looking locally first. It is easy to understand how an actor like the tech industry would be focused on things happening at the global level but that doesn’t mean that they no longer have a responsibility to the local communities that live within the city. If the city is losing its creative and cultural capital that is tied up in these groups leaving, in a few years, Austin’s identity will be void of its signature vibe.

The exodus of musicians from Austin highlights a rather controversial idea about the role of the creative class in rising star cities. In 2002, Richard Florida published *The Rise of the*

Creative Class, which argued that the force behind the economic and cultural changes occurring at the time were due to “the rise of creativity as a fundamental economic force, and the rise of a new social class, the Creative Class,” (Florida, 2012, para. 3) causing many city leaders to look for ways to bring these forces to their own cities. One example used to illustrate this point was that “a vibrant local music scene can signal that a place has the underlying preconditions associated with technological innovation and economic growth,” (Florida, 2012, para. 6) and how if city leaders were going to attract and successfully retain the business of large industries, they need to be paying attention to the creative environment of their city. While the theory itself highlighted important trends like “older cities were starting to regain some of the ground they’d lost to Sun Belt boomtowns,” (Florida, 2012, para. 5) and how the young and talented seemed to be favoring cities over the suburbs, the context within which the creative industries were placed created a significant amount of pushback. This argument seemingly promotes a new kind of cultural elite, where the cultural capital of the musicians and artists are less valued than the capital brought in by the young and talented tech employees. One of Florida’s critics, Frank Bures, points out that this theory rests on ‘creative placemaking’, where “public art and creatively activated spaces can help jumpstart a local economy,” in a way that contextualizes art as “good for business” above anything else (Bures, 2012, para. 5). It creates a seeming “vibrancy Ponzi scheme” that pits cities like Akron and Indianapolis against each other,” (Bures, 2012, para. 9) and creates the possibility that should the creative industries not generate the results promised, city leaders and people will abandon their support in favor of something else. Bures argues that music and art should be promoted because “it adds value to our lives, not our livelihood,” (Bures, 2012, para. 12) effectively balancing the scale of cultural capital. This discussion of the role the creative class should and should not play in a city relates back to the

idea of city branding because music and art within a city should not be subjected to the market forces created by large industries. Not only does this feed into the housing crisis loop, it also devalues the role music and art play in a city. Allowing the cultural base to be chipped away not only puts the city at risk for becoming homogenized and indistinguishable from other cities, but it would eventually require city leaders to artificially fill in the gaps left by the creative industry's departure. Between the housing crisis and the decline of live music in the city, Austin is losing a lot more than just people; it is losing its place based attributes, the aspects that make it unique and that provide authenticity to its brand. City branding efforts would once again provide the framework within which these important conversations can be had. It ensures that stakeholders and the people are interacting in ways that benefit the overall city rather than just one part. But it can also help prioritize the preservation of the city's cultural base without commodifying it or favoring one form over the other. A brand provides clear direction and values that are needed when tackling problems of this magnitude.

By identifying the issues putting Austin's social and cultural fabric at risk, the advantages of city branding become evident. Not only does a clear and cohesive brand mean that stakeholders within a city are seen as supporting the vibrancy of the city, but it also ensures that when faced with an issue like housing affordability, there is enough flexibility and cooperation within the city to ensure that actionable steps can be taken. In the pursuit of creating a certain perception of the city, those within it begin to recognize the need to collaborate together to ensure the city can remain both economically competitive while also retaining an authentic identity.

While this overall section has painted a variety of futures for the city of Austin, the prevailing notion remains that in order to avoid becoming a victim of the its's own success,

something fundamentally has to change in the roles people, industries, stakeholders, etc. play within the city. Branding and creating a city brand is an advantageous option to navigate those futures because not only does it build in flexibility, it also helps establish a clear set of values and beliefs held by those that contribute to the city, making discussions easier because everyone is coming from the same place. The idea is to turn the dialogue within a city from “monologue to feedback,” and create an environment where every stakeholder has “a personal shockproof brand-ometer,” to ensure that “no decision should be made without asking ‘will it help or hurt the brand’,” (Neumeier, 2006, p. 154, 156) illustrating how advantageous taking the step to develop a clear brand can be. What this section also highlights is the importance that “a brand lives throughout,” (Neumeier, 2006, p. 139) the organization and not just in one part, meaning that in order for a city brand to be effective, it has to be adopted and believed in by everyone involved, not just the local government that put it together. This highlights Jane Jacob’s idea about a city and how “no entity, natural or economic, evolves in isolation,” (Neumeier, 2006, p. 51) and therefore in order for a city to effectively change and adapt with the times, there has to be a consensus amongst the stakeholders and people of the city about what is valued and what is and isn’t a part of the city’s identity. With Austin being at an important crossroads in terms of its future and with so many examples of other similar cities becoming victims of their own success, it begs the question of how city leaders plan to coordinate the various competing identities while still grappling with an imploding housing and cultural crises. Without some form of consensus or agreement about what the city should be moving forward, people’s perceptions of Austin will continue to go to the highest, most attractive bidder, not only splintering the city’s identity but also making the city vulnerable to the changing winds of globalization.

The Rebrand

Like many other growing cities, Austin has hit a critical point where the very means of its success can either help continue its forward motion or could be the reason the city falters. The result is largely determined by how willing the stakeholders within the city are to not only work together but put the interest of the city above their own. By going through the weaknesses in Austin's current and potential routes forward, it becomes evident that the cooperation and collaboration of the stakeholders with the city's population and leadership will be vital for not only beginning conversations about the problems but also how to go about solving them. With branding determined to be an advantageous route forward, the question now becomes how to capture Austin's unique identity in an actionable plan.

'In This Together'

While a brand is not a logo, having a visual entry point is a useful tool for making a brand not only approachable but also memorable. Austin has had a variety of accolades showered on it over the past few years, from best college town to best capital city, all of which celebrate the city's rise towards becoming a true global city and its unique energy. Home to nearly 1 million people and various major industry sectors, Austin finds itself in a moment of great innovation across the city ("Austin City, Texas", 2019). The task of developing a brand strategy for the city that captures its identity and effectively communicates its values meant evaluating the tangible and intangible elements that help make the city what it is. The goal was to create a brand that not only highlights Austin's rise in global standing, but also celebrates its commitment to the city and its people. It should encapsulate the unique energy and vibe that has become synonymous with the city while also showing that Austinites and the city's stakeholders are ready to take on global challenges and compete on that level. If effective, it should bring people together and make the

city feel like home. With all of that in mind, the practical application of the brand should be flexible enough to accommodate the various city offices and services that can be brought under one umbrella. The prevailing theme of the brand is that Austin is not just one thing; it is the culmination of various parts. The city's identity lives in the points of intersection between industries, between people, between research, etc. At the heart of Austin is the blending of cultures, the fusion of ideas and histories, all of which comes together under the Austin umbrella. Trailblazing efforts such as Army Future Command that pairs the US Military with Austin tech startups and UT or a local tech startup 3-D printing "a 350-square-foot home in East Austin," for \$10,000 in 24 hours (Leffler, 2020, para. 1) exemplify this spirit. What gives Austin that special environment is the way in which industries, people, companies, are not only willing but excited to collaborate and innovate with one another and create connections throughout various sectors. The phrase 'In this Together' is meant to capture the spirit of that intersectionality and build into the brand that the city is dependent on everyone's contribution and vice versa. This brand will place the people at the forefront by tapping into that place-based collective experience.

Using information from informal interviews and an online survey, the key ideas for the brand were identified from answer patterns. Participants ranged from 20 to 63 years old and were a mix of residents and non-residents of the city. They were asked questions such as how they would describe Austin to a friend and which industry do, they see as being the most influential in the city. While the specifics of the answers varied, two important themes developed. The first is that out of the fifty people who participated, more than 30 of them talked about a dichotomy in the city, saying things like "Austin is really laid back but also hyper productive" or "we have a West Coast vibe with a Northeast work ethic," highlighting how people's perception of the city centers around unexpected elements coming together. The second theme to develop was the

generational gap in conceptualizing the city. The younger participants, less than half of which were new residents, acknowledged that the city has problems but were optimistic that they will get addressed, noting here that most of them planned to stay in the city long term. The older participants tended to have more cynical views, talking for longer about the various problems they see in the city and how it is becoming an unwieldy beast that no one can seem to control. When asked about what makes Austin unique, almost everyone mentioned the energy/vibe of the city and a smattering of local hallmarks such as Zilker, ACL/SXSW or live music in general, and the university. With this information in the background, the idea for the city's visual brand system began to take shape.

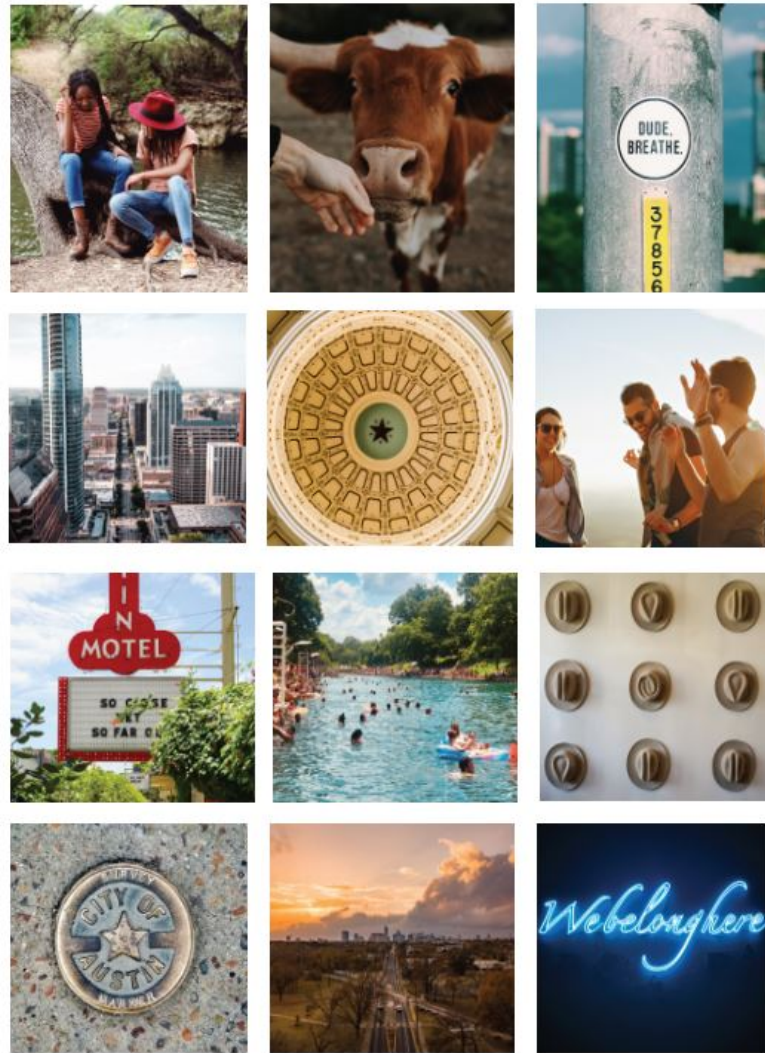


Figure 1-Mood board

The above figure is a mood board of photos from around Austin found on Unsplash. The pictures depict the spirit and the nature of the visual brand and illustrates the feeling the logo will try to convey to the viewer. Some key themes can be identified within these photos such as a sense of freedom and openness but also an underlying order. There are a lot of natural and man-made elements within the photos. Overall, it conveys a sense of community and the built environment meeting the social and cultural parts of the city to communicate the special spirit of the city.



Figure 2- Logo

This logo embodies the ideas of Austin highlighted above. Not only does the swooping ‘S’ shape connect the beginning and end of the word ‘Austin’, bringing it all together, it also symbolizes that free spirit captured within the city. The bright blue is emblematic of the nature found in Austin, from the bright skies on clear days to the lakes and rivers that run throughout the city limits. The font choices create a balance between unexpected twists and turns with the curvature of the letters in ‘Austin’ and the more structured subhead, reinforcing dualities within the city.



Figure 3- Logo Variations

These are two variations of the logo. Their uses are listed in the figure below. The reason the main logo has options is because it highlights the actual flexibility of the logo while also highlighting the flexibility of the city. The idea of adaptability and unique solutions is at the forefront of the logo because those are at the forefront of Austin’s new brand.

	Variation 1	Official	Variation 2	
Formal				for official communications like press releases or letterheads
Informal				for more informal settings like social media, flyers, or community events
Special				for co-branded announcements or special communications from the city
Formal Version 2				for official communications like press releases or letterheads
Informal Version 2				for more informal settings like social media, flyers, or community events
Special Version 2				for co-branded announcements or special communications from the city

fonts

Arlette- Black

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt
Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

Benton Sans- Medium

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu
Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

graphics



colors

	Blue HEX # 44C2EC RGB: 68, 194, 236 CMYK: 61, 2, 2, 0
	Yellow HEX # D5A94B RGB: 213, 169, 75 CMYK: 17, 32, 83, 0
	Red HEX # D52841 RGB: 213, 40, 65 CMYK: 11, 97.76, 1

Figure 4- Brand Profile

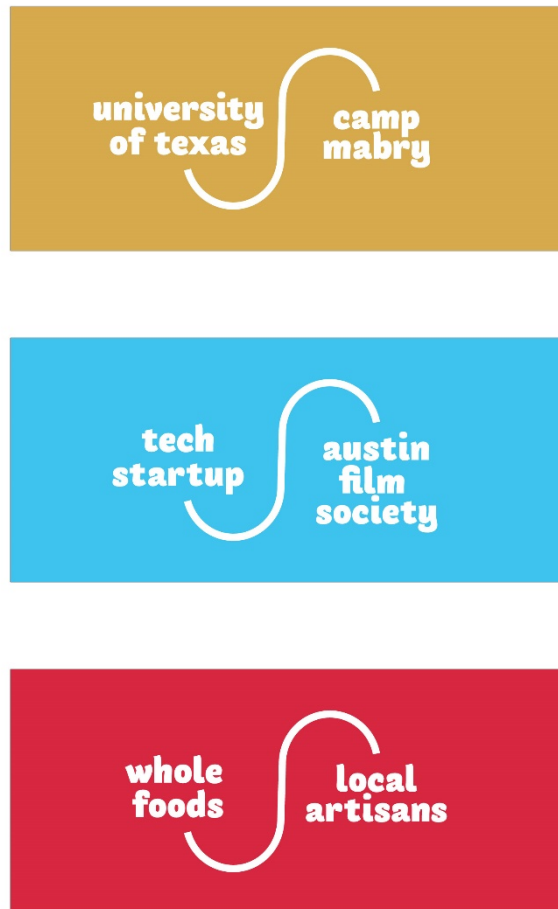


Figure 5- Special Logo Variations

The figure above shows the ways in which the special logo variation can be used to highlight collaborations and innovations. The words on either side of the swooping ‘S’ figure can be changed to match the situation but the idea here is to directly connect different organizations, sectors, groups, etc. within the framework of the brand to show how its these connections that makes Austin the place that it is. These logos can be used on press releases, apparel, or any other assets created by the collaboration.



Figure 6- Apparel

These images illustrate how the logo and its variations can be used for apparel. It is important to consider the ways in which people would interact with a brand and clothing such as shirts and hats are one of the most effective means. The swooping ‘S’, the image of the logo itself, and the ideas wrapped up in it become recognized and well-known extensions of the city.

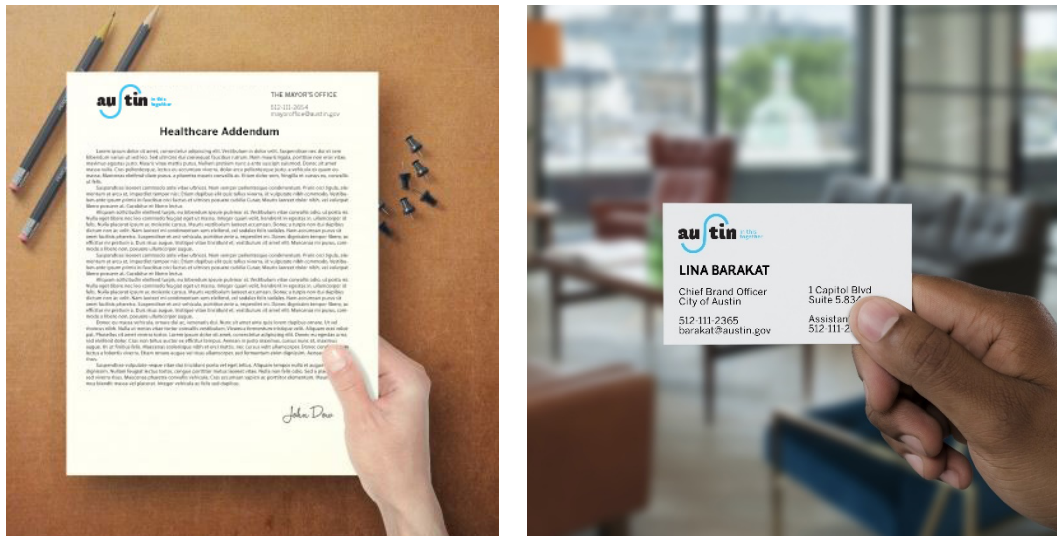


Figure 7- Print Assets

The official logo can be seen here on a business card and on a letterhead. The point here is to illustrate how the logo translates into official communications, conveying both the city's spirit and its serious goals moving forward.

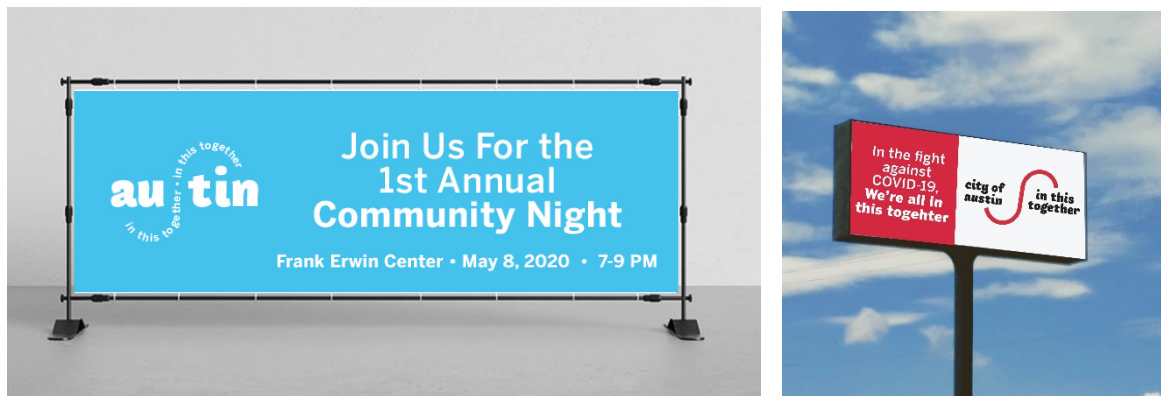


Figure 8- Environmental Assets

These images show how the two variations of the official logo can be used in environmental assets like banners and billboards. They both retain the recognition of the logo and convey the same message but through different means. Banners and billboards are important entry points for the brand which means maintaining the ideas behind the logo is key to their success.

Implementation

With a strong visual representation of the city's identity, the focus can now shift to how this new brand can be practically applied and translated into actions that will help shift the perception of Austin toward 'In This Together'.

The first step, before any programs or initiatives can be proposed, is understanding the role the stakeholders play in this new brand. In order to make the new brand not only successful but also true, the stakeholders in the city such as the various industries, communities, nonprofits, etc. have to play an active role throughout the process. In the early discussions of a rebrand like this, bringing them in on the conversation “sets the foundation for this audience to engage, communicate effectively, share a common objective, and eventually become partners,” (Calvo, 2019, para. 8) and allows for a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities within the framework of the brand. The idea is that without that clarity among the stakeholders about the brand, it increases the chance that “there will be no clear city brand but rather an incoherent set of fragmented sub-brands each delivering its own messaging, or worse still, no conscious branding at all,” (Dinnie, 2011, p. 94) which defeats the purpose of going through the branding process. But in order to avoid overwhelming the project with opinions and ideas, “establishing a central governance unit is necessary to ensure tough conversations are had,” (Calvo, 2019, para. 9) and to try and keep conflicts at bay while keeping the brand development moving. This suggestion in particular is important because it prevents the stakeholders from policing each other or losing sight of the goal. The reason these steps are necessary are not only to ensure equal participation of stakeholders across the city but also “empower them to take ownership of the place brand,” (Calvo, 2019, para. 12) and become brand ambassadors for the city and entry

points for its image. The belief and buy-in of stakeholders is vital for the success of a city brand and by being upfront with them about their participation, role and responsibilities as a stakeholder in the city, it ensures no confusion later down the line. It breathes collaboration and forthright-ness into the brand that provides flexibility and an openness for interaction amongst the stakeholders. More importantly, it ensures that people and the general well-being of the city remain at the forefront of decisions rather than a background consideration. Especially for brands like Austin's, there needs to be not only community, but place-based initiatives that stakeholders play active roles in as they take a more responsible role in the city.

Once the framework within which the brand is developed and will be implemented, the real work begins of how to translate a set of ideas and values into actionable change. The first area of focus is economics. Austin's rapid growth is continuing and with that comes the continuation of various manifestations of the New Urban Crisis, leaving a large portion of the population vulnerable to falling victim to it. Within the framework of 'In this Together', city leaders and stakeholders need to evaluate how they not only contributed to the creation of these issues but also how to go about solving them. One economic incentive that has shown promise in other booming Sun Belt cities is the creation of a place-based economy. The Upjohn Institute published a report outlining how cities can "enrich the human capital of a community's residents while making that community more desirable to employers and new residents," (Miller-Adams, Hershbein, Bartik, Timmeney, Meyers, 2019, p.1) through three initiatives. The first is Promise Programs, where scholarships are offered to high school graduates that live within the city to help pay for them to attend a local university. If the program can be created as a collaboration between the schools, local industries, and government, not only will it help " extend beyond expanding access to and affordability of postsecondary education" and improve the development

of the workforce, it also can “contribute to local prosperity by serving as catalysts for economic and educational improvements,” (Miller-Adams et al., 2019, p.3) in addition to ensuring that families remain in the city and establish a strong sense of place. Programs such as this can kick off other initiatives that feed into the community and help facilitate conversations amongst stakeholders of how investment into low income or minority communities can not only benefit them with more highly educated workers, but also safeguard the city from losing that family. In Austin, a potential program could be that the tech and health industries create scholarships in partnership with the various universities and colleges throughout the city to help pay for students interested in those fields to attend school for little or no money. This creates a direct link between the interests of industry leaders looking for a larger work force and helping close the wealth gap in the city that is causing so many to leave. Individual companies can fund scholarships or even set up summer camps and internships directed at helping enrich the community in a variety of ways.

The second initiative is about supporting businesses. For local businesses, one idea is to establish Employer Resource Networks that bring business owners together to “more effectively address issues through coordination and shared research, both among themselves and with stronger partnerships,” (Miller-Adams et al., 2019, p.14) with the major industries in the area. Austin’s startup culture is well established with programs such as the Whole Foods Local Producer Loan Program, which has been responsible for the success of brands such as Seaweed Bath Co., Amplify Foods, and Epic Provisions, found throughout the city and in every industry. Establishing something like ERNs not only gives local business owners more autonomy, it also ensures them a pool of resources and opportunities they may not have had otherwise. The goal for such networks is to address the issues facing local businesses in a setting where real change

can be discussed and the presence of major stakeholders in the city means that ERNs could reach out to industry leaders for workshops, partnerships, or research collaboration, further widening the resource pool but also making business success a city-wide initiative. One possible manifestation of this idea is that local retail stores can partner with a start-up to streamline the way they track expenses or to address a gap that exists in the current software they use. Again, this initiative highlights the importance of the interdependence between industries and between people. Having systems in place to help facilitate discussion will ultimately help facilitate innovations and solutions that create success across the board.

The third initiative focuses on how city leaders should go about incentivizing a company to relocate or build a new branch within their city. While Austin has no issues convincing companies to move to the city, the typical way these processes happen is that city leaders offer large corporations tax incentives that either outline tax breaks or money given to the companies in exchange for their relocation which brings job opportunities with it. The issue is that such practices often create more problems than they solve because taxpayers are left not only footing a part of the bill for a company's relocation, but also have to deal with the increased strain on infrastructure and rising housing prices. Incentivizing companies in this way can be detrimental to a city. As an alternative, a city can “leverage large-scale investments in transportation infrastructure and educational programs,” (Miller-Adams et al., 2019, p.10) as a way of not only offsetting the spatial changes brought in by new companies but also ensuring the future success of both the company and the community through educational programs. Austin has the benefit of already having major companies in the city, but if the city is going to grow at the expected rate, more may set their sights on calling Austin home. A brand like ‘In This Together’ necessitates that the overall well-being of the city is the most important factor to be considered and that if a

company looking to relocate to Austin isn't willing to invest in the infrastructure and the communities that it will inevitably impact, than it indicates a misalignment in values between the city and the company. In this case, the brand acts as the gatekeeper for the city, ensuring that only those that are willing to not only agree to it but embrace it are allowed through.

Not only do these three incentives feed directly into the 'In This Together' brand, but they are also all attainable goals for helping stimulate economic activity and success for everyone within a city, rather than just one part. The idea that within a city, the "most productive actors are universities, medical centers, and other anchor institutions," along with "local investors; and neighborhood and civic organizations," (Florida, 2019, para. 7) means that these stakeholders have the ability and responsibility of ensuring community vitality. One benefit to creating economic pathways through stakeholders in the city is that it shifts the model for economic initiatives from "a grant-driven federal model for urban policy toward a more localized, bottom-up, entrepreneur-driven model," (Florida, 2019, para. 9) meaning that the creators of the programs are more likely to be invested in its continued success. It calls for rethinking the function of economic clusters within the city. Where once the clusters were seen as just "geographic concentrations of interconnected companies and institutions in a particular field," (Porter, 1998, para. 8) in today's world, they not only reconceptualize place, they also challenge "much of the conventional wisdom about how companies should be configured, how institutions such as universities can contribute to competitive success, and how governments can promote economic development and prosperity," (Porter, 1998, para. 7) in ways that promote collaboration and innovation. These economic initiatives help create vibrant clusters that "can tap into an existing pool of specialized and experienced employees, thereby lowering their search and transaction costs in recruiting," and fuel competition amongst local companies. In today's

context, clusters represent microcosms of public-private sector relations that help emphasize “companies, no less than governments and universities, have a stake in education. Universities have a stake in the competitiveness of local businesses,” (Porter, 1998, para. 83) and that a city should not be divided along the lines of the public and private realm. The melding and cooperation between the two is what makes economic clusters successes and in turn make the cities they occupy better overall. These initiatives not only create clusters across industries, but they help make the most of the ones already present. These economic benefits of a brand are important because they are what allow city leaders to in turn invest it in other initiatives aimed at cultivating the social and cultural aspects of the city.

When it comes to investing in the social frameworks of a city, one potential area for city leaders and stakeholders to look at is the social infrastructure. Described as the physical places that help shape the way people interact, these spaces include “Public institutions, such as libraries, schools, playgrounds, and athletic fields” (Klienenberg, 2018, para. 4) along with any other space where people can gather or interact with others in informal ways. When there is a wide array and robust investment in these places, “it fosters contact, mutual support, and collaboration among friends and neighbors” and “when degraded, it inhibits social activity, leaving families and individuals to fend for themselves,” (Klienenberg, 2018, para. 3) highlighting a typically unnoticed phenomenon. Not only do these spaces teach people how to interact with those that may be different from them, it also helps remove the commercialization aspect found in other forms of public life and builds a safety net for the community. Austin just recently built the Central Library that has drawn national attention for its design and is a clear first step by the local government to invest in the city’s social infrastructure. But city leaders and stakeholders need to be looking at the spaces in communities that can serve this important

purpose and how they can be enriched. Whether it is renovating a library branch, building a community pool, funding a neighborhood garden, whatever it may be, social infrastructure plays such a vital role in people's everyday lives and many cities run the risk of allowing such spaces to collapse. The investment in these places translates to healthier communities and stronger ties to the city than otherwise could have been accomplished. Recognizing that funding these social spaces is investing in a communities future not only reinforces the idea that the city is 'In This Together' but also that this new direction calls for thinking on the community and neighborhood level and helping fill the gaps in those spaces first to ensure the well-being of the people.

When talking about branding, there is always a discussion about culture. Not only what it is but the role it plays and how that gets communicated in the new brand. In some cases, culture is thought of as providing "marketable aesthetic experiences," and as something that "functions as a resource for economic activity, both directly by attracting cultural tourists and indirectly by attracting activities often with little direct culture content," (Kavaratzis, Warnaby, Ashworth, 2015, p. 123) essentially abstracting culture out of the context in which it is continually shaped. This makes place "both an entity whose meaning is interminably being renegotiated through its culture in response to social and political change, within and beyond it, but also is a commodified and marketable product," (Kavaratzis, Warnaby, Ashworth, 2015, p. 130) embedding a contradiction into how identity is conceptualized and makes culture an abstract idea that seems to hover above a city rather than something fundamental to its fabric. The task then is to highlight those key connections between how the city is shaped by culture and how culture in turn shapes the city. That "connectivity is therefore important in creating and sustaining new branded quarters," (Kavaratzis, Warnaby, Ashworth, 2015, p. 157) and making those points of intersection the framework within which culture is discussed. By grounding culture in this way,

it allows the brand to take on a sense of being ingrained in the city because it rests on points that make it a unique place. This allows for the information that will influence the branding process to be used in deliberate and conscious ways that aim not to essentialize but rather preserve a degree of nuance that creates an authentic yet inviting brand. This distinction is an important one to make because branding efforts can change the future of Austin and without preserving these key cultural points in a proper way, they will get lost with time and diffuse into the city rather than remain unique. City leaders have already laid a solid foundation within the city to celebrate and highlight culture. The Economic Development Department's Cultural Arts division has programs such as Art in Public Places and Artist-in-Residence programs that are meant to bring the public's attention to the cultural elements within the city. One way to build on that momentum is creating a stakeholder task force to look at and help reverse the decline of live music in the city. By tapping leaders from various industries and putting the need to restore this vital cultural element in the city at the forefront, the city's stakeholders are able to work collaboratively and propose a variety of solutions. Another cultural investment could be city leaders and stakeholders sponsoring a series of projects centered around Austin's diverse population. This could be commissioning something like cookbooks that highlight different areas around the city, or having an open-air market that moves each weekend to a new neighborhood or district, essentially getting people to explore the various parts of Austin that they otherwise may not have known about. What the cultural aspect of city branding does is to identify the barriers within a place that allows people to be siloed in their own neighborhood and community and how to create a more integrated city where the diversity of views and ideas can intermingle and create an unknown amount of opportunity.

Overall, the city of Austin's new brand identity not only creates a clear set of priorities amongst the stakeholders and within the city, it also communicates a clear message to those outside of the city about what is at the core of Austin. It not only highlights the success of the city but paves the way forward for global innovations and contributions. The city can become an industrial force while actively preserving and enriching the local culture and heritage. It is a city of intersections, each cross section contributing to its unique identity and place.

Conclusion

In 2012, the Austin City Council announced a new development plan that would help shape Austin and prepare it for the demands of the future, called "Imagine Austin". It posed questions such as "how to accommodate more people, in a considered and sustainable fashion, while preserving what we value so that we get better not just bigger," and "As we grow and evolve, how can we preserve and amplify the special things we value about Austin?" ("Imagine Austin", 2012, p. 3, 4) which pinpoint some of the growing pains the city as a whole has gone through following a significant economic growth spurt. While this plan continues to get updated and revised, its effectiveness feels strained against the growing size and power of local industries and the growing urban crisis. There is seemingly no prevailing path forward outside the context of this report. The plan in and of itself is important because it spells out the issues facing the city but fails to recognize the lack of coordinated direction that is slowly undoing the city. Left unaddressed, the competing interests at the top will not only have drastic impacts on the population (that is left) but also spread the city's interests and resources too thin to be effective. It would not be the first time a city was undone by its own success, but the key here is the recognition that Austin has not reached that point yet. While it may be in the middle of an

identity crisis, there is still time and room to pivot the city in a direction that will not only help rebuild various parts of the city but also prepare it to compete on a global level.

While city branding may not be a solve-all solution for city leaders looking to join global discussions, it does provide an important framework that would allow them to not only maintain progress at the local level, but to effectively contribute to the world in new ways. By going through a branding process and identifying what isn't working now or will create problems in the future along with creating a new and clear set of priorities and goals for the city in tandem with stakeholders, city leaders will be able to ensure that while local industry leaders are looking to the global market, the well-being of the city is safeguarded through the various programs, initiatives, and collaborations set in motion at the forefront. The repositioning of stakeholders within the brand to supporting actors rather than the lead ensures that economic development will not overrun the city and sow the seeds of its demise, but rather the barometer of success is the health and well-being of the social and cultural aspects of the city. In this case, city branding and creating the mosaic identity of the city not only helps stimulate conversations about the future success of the city, they also help create a clear and consistent image of what the city is and what it stands for.

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